



Building Welcoming Communities

A Summary of the BC-Yukon Newcomer Needs
& Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)
Evaluation Report

August 2026

Prepared For:



Funded By:



About Inclusivity

Inclusivity (<https://inclusivityinsight.com/>) was contracted by the BC/Yukon LIP, ZIP, and RIF Network to conduct an independent third-party study to better understand newcomer experiences and strengthen service delivery across 26 communities; the findings and recommendations will inform a report to be published in 2027.

Inclusivity is a Canadian consulting firm that helps organizations build stronger workplace cultures through leadership development, organizational assessments, and practical people strategies. We work alongside leaders as trusted advisors, helping them navigate complex people challenges and create workplaces where both people and performance thrive.

As an IBPOC-owned organization with majority women in leadership positions, we bring diverse lived experience together with expertise in leadership, human resources, workplace culture, and data-informed organizational assessment. Our work combines strategic advice with practical implementation, helping organizations build the internal capacity needed for lasting success.

Since 2016, we've partnered with organizations across North America, including many of Canada's largest employers, supporting sustainable change through advisory services, leadership development, coaching, learning, and organizational assessments.

Territory Acknowledgement

Inclusivity acknowledges that this work touches traditional and unceded lands from coast to coast across British Columbia and Yukon. Inclusivity's main office is located on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We are grateful for the privilege of being on this land and acknowledge the resilience and continued stewardship of the traditional peoples.



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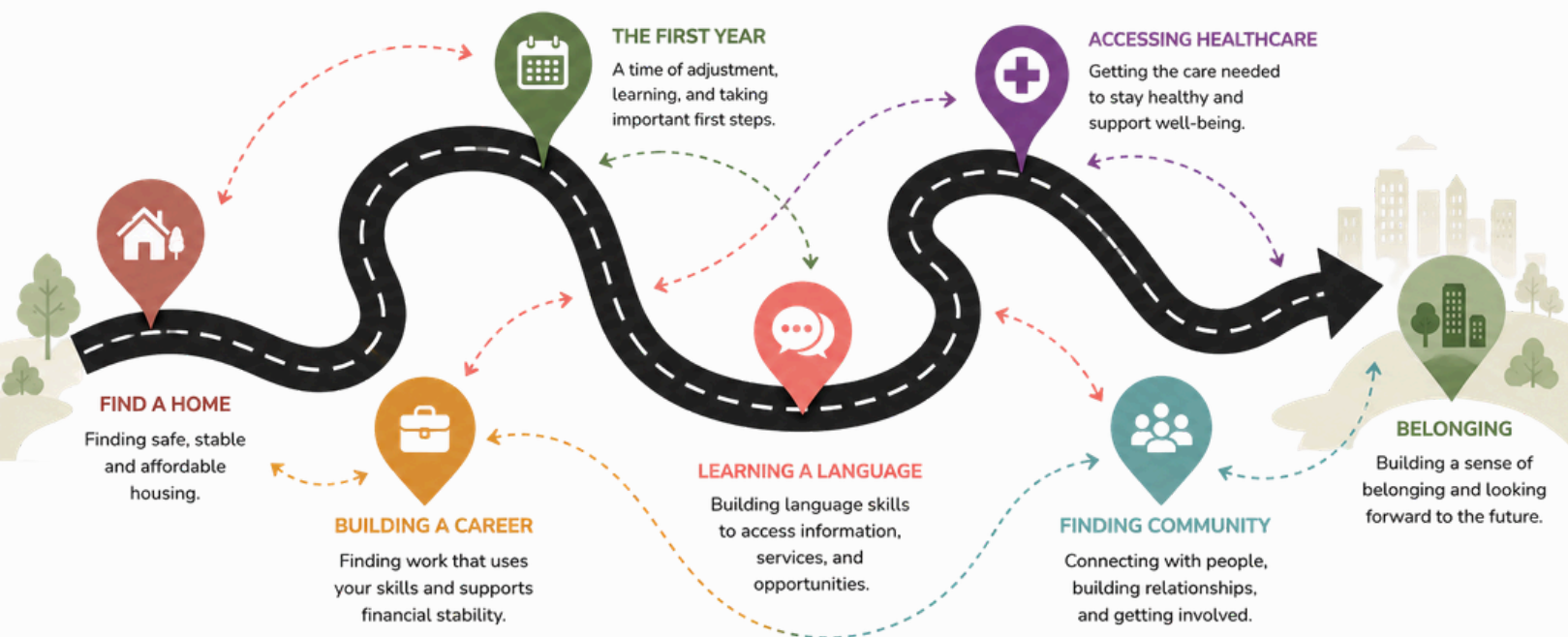
The Story of the Newcomer Settlement Journey

Every newcomer arrives in Canada with a different story. Each person brings their own experiences, skills, knowledge, cultures, languages, hopes, and reasons for building a new life in Canada. Newcomers contribute to the social, cultural, and economic life of communities across the country, bringing new perspectives and experiences while building careers, supporting families, forming relationships, and creating a sense of home.

Canada continues to welcome newcomers as an important part of its economic and demographic growth. At the same time, communities and settlement organizations are supporting growing, increasingly diverse newcomer populations amid an ever-changing funding environment and finite resources. This context shapes the availability, capacity, and consistency of settlement support across the provinces and provides important context for understanding newcomer experiences.

While no two settlement journeys are the same, newcomers across BC and Yukon described many similar experiences as they worked to establish themselves in a new community.

For many families and individuals, the journey begins with finding a place to live and looking for work to provide for themselves. It often continues through learning how unfamiliar systems operate, developing different language skills, accessing healthcare and other essential services, and building relationships with the community. For most, these experiences can, and will, create the stability and sense of belonging that allow a new place to start feeling like home.



Settlement is not a straightforward or linear process. Newcomers often navigate many of these experiences simultaneously, and progress in one area can influence outcomes in another. For instance, **stable housing** can make it easier to search for work, and **meaningful employment opportunities** can support **financial security, well-being, and comfortable housing**. **Language** can equally shape access to services such as **healthcare, employment opportunities, relationships and community connections**. These **community connections** can reduce isolation and help newcomers locate and access **beneficial information and support**.

A welcoming community is built through these interrelated experiences. It can be found in an employer who recognizes international work experience, a neighbour who invites a new family to a community event, guidance that helps someone navigate an unfamiliar rental system, or a service provider who makes information easier to access. These experiences help newcomers build stability, participate in community life, and contribute their skills, knowledge, and perspectives. As newcomers establish themselves, the communities they call home also benefit from their participation and contributions.

Across BC and Yukon, newcomer survey respondents consistently described communities that were welcoming, inclusive, and ultimately willing to help them succeed. At the same time, many shared common barriers related to housing, employment, healthcare, and accessing services. While settlement experiences differed across communities and newcomer groups, several themes emerged consistently across the provinces.



I believe that if newcomers receive help and the right information at the beginning of the settlement process, especially through a case manager, the settlement journey will not be prolonged.

– Newcomer Participant

About This Report

This report follows the newcomer settlement journey while recognizing the broader context in which settlement occurs. Newcomers navigate housing, employment, healthcare, language learning, and community connections alongside settlement organizations and local partners that are working to respond to increasing demand within current funding and resource capacity.

The report begins with the immediate foundations of settlement, such as finding housing and employment, before exploring the role of early support, language, healthcare, age, and location. It then examines the partnerships, funding environment, and local systems that help communities respond to newcomer needs. Together, these findings highlight what is working well, where barriers remain, and where opportunities exist to strengthen settlement experiences across BC and the Yukon.

19

Indicators of a Welcoming Community

This assessment is grounded in a framework developed by Pathways to Prosperity Canada that identifies the conditions, from housing and employment to belonging and civic participation, that determine how well a community supports newcomers as they settle. These are the Indicators of a Welcoming Community.

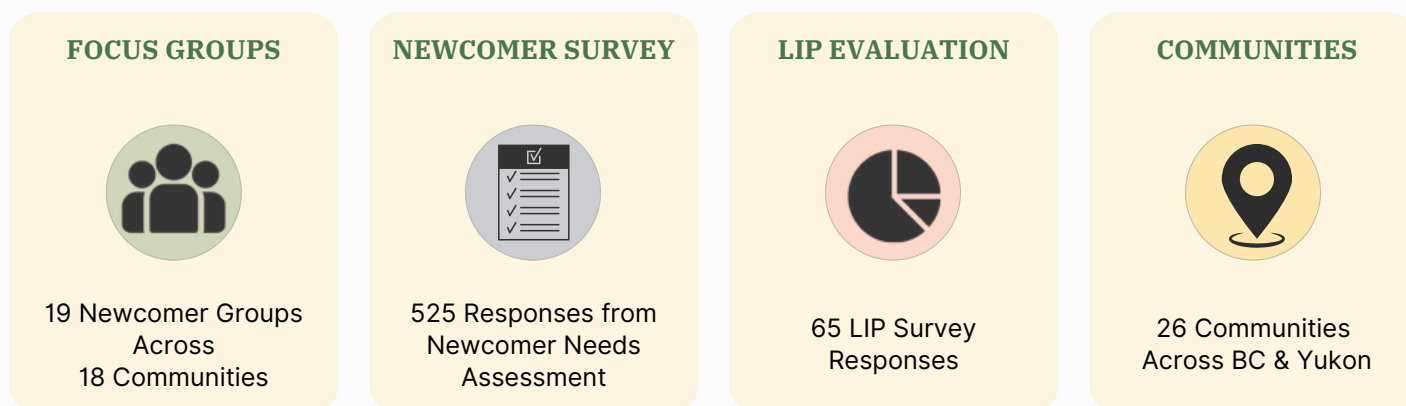
Applying this framework allows the findings from BC and Yukon to be analyzed consistently across regions and newcomer groups, and situates local results within a national standard for what a welcoming community looks like.

Our Approach

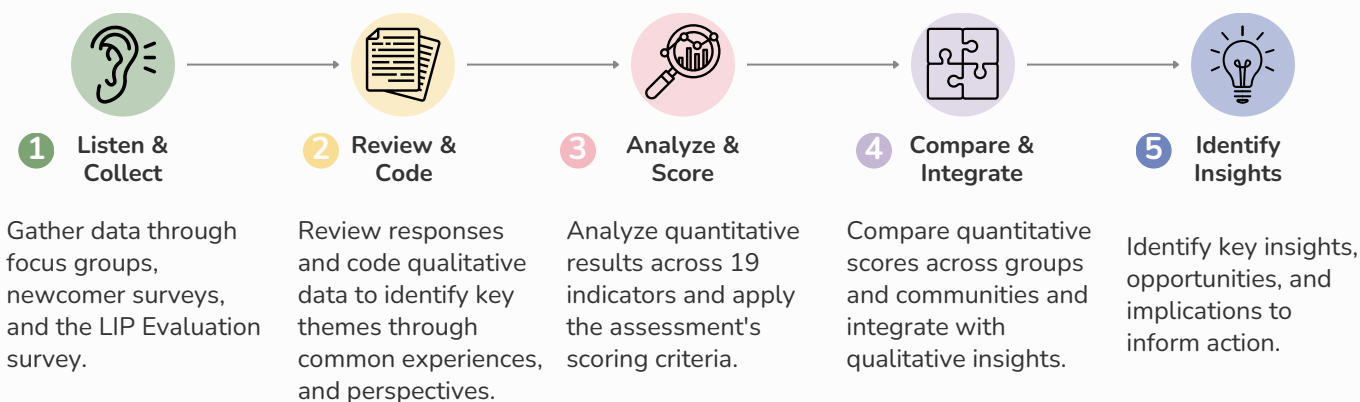
This assessment used a mixed-methods approach to understand newcomer settlement experiences across British Columbia and the Yukon. Quantitative survey data were analyzed alongside qualitative insights from focus groups and open-ended survey responses to identify common themes and patterns and to understand the experiences and perspectives behind them.

The methodology was shaped through early consultation and collaboration with the project team and the BC-Yukon Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). Together, we adapted the assessment framework to the regional context, developed a unique scoring approach, coordinated data collection, and engaged LIPs to support outreach and encourage newcomer participation across communities.

How We Gathered Information



From Information to Findings



Why a Mixed Methods Approach?

Numbers help show what is happening, and newcomer experiences help explain what those numbers mean. Bringing both together allows the assessment to determine and name patterns across BC and Yukon, while retaining the experiences and perspectives that provide context to those patterns.



Finding a Place to Call Home

INSIGHT 1 – Housing as the Foundation of Settlement

For many newcomers, finding a place to live, sleep and eat is the first step to settling in Canada. A safe, affordable home is more than a shelter; it provides the stability needed to look for job opportunities, access healthcare, enroll children in local schools, learn English or French, and start building relationships in their neighbourhoods and communities.

Across British Columbia and the Yukon, housing emerged as one of the most consistent barriers that newcomers described, with only 58% of respondents feeling that they were able to find suitable housing, and 58% feeling supported throughout the search for housing.

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Housing isn't just a roof over your head; it's the foundation for feeling settled, being part of the community, and thriving overall. Without access to affordable and secure housing, other parts of life can be seriously affected.

– Newcomer Participant

Only 58% of respondents felt they were able to find suitable housing.



58%

Felt supported through housing guidance.



58%

Felt they were able to find a suitable home.

Regardless of where they settled, participants shared similar experiences: rising housing costs, limited availability, and a rental system that assumes newcomers already have a Canadian credit history and local references —information that a new arrival does not have. While many communities were described as welcoming, finding and securing suitable housing remained one of the biggest obstacles to building a stable life in Canada and continuing the settlement journey.

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Affordable housing gives newcomers stability and security. Without a safe place to live, it's harder to work, access healthcare, or build social connections. A stable home helps them feel settled and grow in their new community.

– Newcomer Participant



Building Financial Stability

INSIGHT 2 – Employment as a Pathway to Independence

Similar to housing, finding work is a crucial step toward building financial security and independence for many newcomers. Meaningful employment provides more than income; it creates opportunities to use skills, support a family, build self-confidence, develop relationships, and contribute to communities.

“Many newcomers do not have access to meaningful employment opportunities, which leads to significant stress. This is why employment is such an important issue for newcomers. Everyone wants to earn a living, especially since the cost of living in Canada is high, and managing daily expenses is not easy for newcomer families.

– Newcomer Participant

Newcomers arrive in Canada with diverse education, professional experience, and skills. However, participants described significant barriers to finding work that reflected their backgrounds and qualifications. Challenges included limited access to suitable job opportunities, language barriers, unfamiliarity with international credentials, difficulty providing Canadian references, and the time and cost required to complete certifications or licensing requirements.

Credential Recognition

International education & experience not easily recognized or understood

Canadian Experience

Many employers prefer Canadian work experience or local references

Language Barriers

Can affect employment search, interviews, networking, and workplace communication.

Certification

The cost and time required for licensing and certification delays workforce entry

Limited Opportunities

Available work often does not align with skills, education, or previous experience.

While we heard from some newcomers who were able to find work, many described challenges in finding meaningful employment that matched their skills and experience. When newcomers are unable to fully use the education, knowledge, skills, and experience they bring, it restricts their ability to achieve financial security and build their careers, and it limits the ways communities can benefit from the valuable contributions newcomers have to offer.

“It was very hard to find a job in this community. I had the impression that it was due to unfamiliarities with my resume, not coming from this community, and not having locally recognized college degrees. I felt it was too complicated for employers to determine whether I was a good match, and they instead chose applicants whose background and credentials were more familiar and easier to understand.

– Newcomer Participant

Employment and entrepreneurship received the lowest overall score across the 19 Welcoming Community Indicators.

46.8%  Received help when searching for employment

43.6%  Felt able to find employment that matched their skills and experience



The First Year Matters

INSIGHT 3 – Early Support Shapes What Comes Next

The first year in Canada is one of the most demanding stages of the settlement journey. Newcomers are frequently navigating many priorities at once – from finding housing and employment to accessing healthcare, education, settlement services, and transportation. At the same time, this is also the stage when newcomers are least familiar with the systems they are expected to navigate and the support available to help them.

Although every settlement journey is unique, the findings show that newcomers who have lived in Canada for less than one year reported significantly lower outcomes across several of the Welcoming Community Indicators. Employment, healthcare, social and community networks, education, immigrant-serving agencies, and neighbourhood belonging were among the areas in which newcomers in the earliest stages of settlement experienced the greatest challenges.



Looking at the numbers, newcomers who had been in Canada for less than one year reported **lower outcomes across these key areas.**



Employment

60.3%



Healthcare

68.2%



Social and Community
Networks

68.6%

During their first year, newcomers are not only learning how to navigate unfamiliar systems but also trying to access services and support that are limited or difficult to reach. Newcomer participants described obstacles to finding clear and consistent information, knowing where to look for support, and connecting with services that truly met their needs, introducing another layer of difficulty to an already demanding stage of settlement.



As a newcomer who has been in Canada for two months, I believe newcomers have many needs but the most important is being connected to the right social worker/case worker.

– Newcomer Participant

Early settlement experiences can shape what comes next. Difficulty finding work can directly affect financial stability, while barriers to navigating healthcare, mental health supports, or settlement services can add more stress. At the same time, limited opportunities to interact with others and build relationships can make it increasingly more difficult for newcomers to feel connected to their communities. Clear information, accessible services, and early navigation or case management support can help newcomers connect to the right resources and make these early experiences easier to navigate.

When newcomers receive the right support early on, including case management and help navigating complex and unfamiliar systems, they are better able to access the opportunities and services they need, build connections, participate in community life, make informed decisions, and ultimately build a stronger foundation for long-term settlement success and stability as their settlement journey continues.

The first year is not only about adjusting to a new community—it is about building the foundation for everything that follows.



Language Shapes Access

INSIGHT 4 – Language Influences Every Part of Settlement

For many, if not most, newcomers, language is more than communication; it's a gateway to participation and inclusion. It influences and shapes how newcomers find housing and employment, access healthcare and education, understand unfamiliar systems, and build relationships with their communities.

Across the assessment, newcomers who could not converse in English or French reported lower outcomes in several areas of settlement. The pattern was especially clear in housing, employment, healthcare, and education, showing how language barriers can make other settlement barriers more difficult to navigate.



I believe learning English is the most important need because without language, newcomers cannot go anywhere. Language opens all doors, like finding a job, making friends, and understanding Canadian systems.

– Newcomer Participant

Access in Both Official Languages, Not Just the Majority

Francophone participants described many gaps in French-language services across different aspects of the settlement process, including healthcare, education, employment and other public services. Francophone newcomers also found that the limited access to bilingual staff and services made it more difficult to receive support in the official language they were most comfortable using. These findings highlight that French-language service gaps are not only a language barrier, but also an issue of access to services in both of Canada's official languages.



There are two official languages in Canada. It would be helpful if schools, healthcare services, the police and legal institutions had at least one person who could speak French.

– Newcomer Participant

Because language shapes so many other parts of settlement, investing in language education and strengthening access to services in both official languages does more than improve communication; it strengthens access to housing, employment, healthcare, and community life. Closing language gaps helps newcomers understand their options, make informed decisions, communicate their needs, and engage with their communities with greater confidence.

Access to Language Learning

Many newcomer participants described language learning as a crucial step toward greater independence and participation in community life. However, accessing language classes across BC and Yukon was not always straightforward. Long waitlists and limited class availability meant that some newcomers could not begin classes when they needed them, while eligibility requirements and reduced funding further limited access to programs. Traditional class schedules also created challenges for newcomers who were balancing work and family responsibilities. Participants called for more flexible options, including evening, weekend, online, and hybrid programs, as well as supports that make it easier for parents and caregivers to participate.



Younger Newcomers are Experiencing Settlement Differently

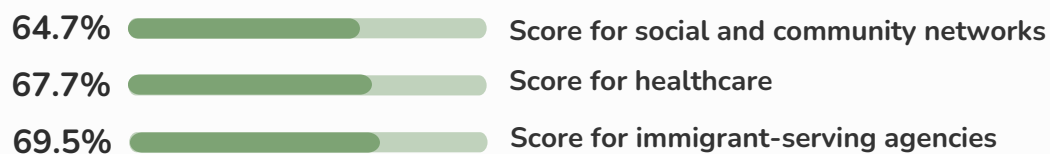
INSIGHT 5 – Age Can Shape Access, Connection, and Belonging

Age can shape how newcomers experience settlement, influencing how they access services, build relationships, and develop a sense of belonging in their communities. While many settlement challenges are shared, the findings demonstrate that age can influence how newcomers access services, build relationships, and develop a sense of belonging in their communities.

Respondents Born in 1995 or later

Gen Z respondents or younger were among the lowest-scoring demographic groups across several of the **Welcoming Community Indicators**. These lower scores appeared in some of the most crucial areas of settlement, including healthcare, transportation, immigrant-serving agencies, social and community networks, and neighbourhood belonging. Because this pattern appeared across multiple areas, it suggests younger newcomers may experience aspects of settlement differently in BC and the Yukon, including how they connect with the supports and services around them.

Younger Newcomer Scores



While younger newcomers may be expected to adjust more easily to life in a new community, the survey findings suggest a slightly more complicated experience. Further exploration is needed to better understand what may be contributing to these differences. Younger newcomers may have different ways of looking for and finding information, accessing available support, and building relationships. Paying attention to these differences can help communities and agencies assess whether existing services and opportunities reach younger newcomers and reflect their needs.

Supporting Different Settlement Experiences

Age is one of many factors that can shape the settlement journey and is crucial to consider when organizing newcomer services. Exploring more tailored service and engagement approaches could make supports easier to find, create meaningful opportunities for younger newcomers to connect with services and their communities, and ultimately better reflect their experiences.

By recognizing that settlement can look different across generations, communities can better support younger newcomers as they arrive in Canada looking for a community and a place to call home.



Accessing Healthcare

INSIGHT 6 – Health as a Foundation for Wellbeing and Settlement

As newcomers begin building stability, finding a home and work, and navigating life in a new community, being able to care for themselves and their families becomes a pivotal part of the settlement journey. Regardless of citizenship, access to timely and appropriate healthcare significantly supports newcomers' well-being and their ability to work, study, care for their family, and ultimately participate in community life.

While many respondents reported knowing how to navigate the healthcare system, they also described challenges in actually accessing the care they needed. Finding a family doctor was one of the most common concerns, with some newcomers facing extremely long waitlists, limited appointment availability, barriers to registering with physicians, and very few alternatives outside walk-in clinics or emergency departments.



My family and I don't have a family doctor. When something happens, we go to the hospital and wait 10 to 12 hours because it's the only way to get care.

– Newcomer Participant

Understanding how to navigate the healthcare system does not always mean being able to access care.

Many newcomers in BC and the Yukon described having uncertainty about where to access immediate healthcare, how referrals work, which services are covered by provincial medical plans, and how to access appropriate support.

Mental Health in Part of Settlement

The emotional impact of adapting to life in a new country was a common theme in the Newcomer Assessment. Participants described how financial pressures, isolation from familiar surroundings, ongoing uncertainty and instability, and the challenges of navigating unfamiliar systems can all affect mental well-being. However, access to mental health supports remained limited, with around 55% of survey respondents reporting having access to mental health support when needed.



Coming from another country and adapting to a new culture has impacted my mental health. Many newcomers have experienced trauma, and I believe mental health services are very important.

– Newcomer Participant

Improving access to primary care, providing clearer and more accessible information, and expanding culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health supports can directly help newcomers care for themselves and their families, if applicable, as they build their lives in a new community.



Supporting Welcoming Communities

INSIGHT 7 – Strengthening the Systems that Support Newcomers

Throughout this report, newcomers shared the opportunities and challenges they experienced while building their lives in BC and Yukon. Their ability to find housing, build careers, access services, care for their families, and form connections affects more than their individual settlement journeys. When newcomers have opportunities to use their skills, share their experiences, and participate in community life, the communities they call home also benefit.

Creating these opportunities requires the involvement of many organizations and sectors. Settlement organizations, municipalities, employers, schools, healthcare providers, libraries, and community organizations each play a role in responding to newcomer needs. Local Immigration Partnerships help bring these partners together to better understand local priorities, strengthen coordination, and support community-wide approaches to settlement.

The **LIP Council Evaluation** found strong results in several areas. Respondents viewed their organizations as inclusive, welcoming to newcomers, aware of newcomer needs, and actively engaged with newcomer communities. These outcomes reflect the work already taking place across BC and Yukon and the value of bringing local partners together around shared priorities.

LIP Council Evaluation: Overall Level of Agreement Based on Indicator





Supporting Welcoming Communities

INSIGHT 7 – Strengthening the Systems that Support Newcomers

Sustaining Local Efforts with More Funding

While the LIP evaluation identified many strengths, funding remained a major barrier. Only 32.3% of respondents agreed that their organization received adequate funding to sustain newcomer-focused programs and services. Respondents described limited funding as a barrier to supporting and expanding programs and responding to changing needs within their communities.

Council members also identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration, advocacy, and coordination across organizations. Strong local partnerships can help organizations share knowledge, align their efforts, and build on the resources and experience already present within their communities.

As communities continue to grow and change, their ability to welcome and support newcomers will remain important. Ensuring that newcomers can access opportunities, participate in community life, and contribute their skills and experiences requires strong local partnerships and the capacity to sustain them over time.

“

So much more can be done with more funding. Help advocate for increased funding to support newcomer and inclusive programs and initiatives.

– LIP Representative

“

[French Comment] We're already a very inclusive community, but the lack of funding doesn't always help.

– LIP Representative

“

Government funding (IRCC) or lack of it has proven to be a hindrance for many programs and clients.

– LIP Representative

Current Context in Canada's Continued Need for Immigrants and Newcomers

Immigration has long played a central role in shaping Canada's history, growth, and identity. Across generations, newcomers have helped build communities, strengthen the workforce, support local economies, and contribute to Canada's cultural and linguistic diversity; all powerful pillars of the society Canada has become. That role is not just historical. It is structural and constantly growing.

380,000

Number of Planned Annual Permanent Resident Admissions, 2026 –2028 IRCC Immigration Levels Plan

Since the late 1980s, Canada has steadily increased immigration levels to sustain population and labour force growth, and today it depends on immigration for essentially all labour force growth.

Nearly half of the new permanent residents admitted in 2025 were already living in Canada as international students or temporary workers. Many newcomers included in this assessment are already working, studying, and raising families in BC and the Yukon before obtaining permanent status. The barriers in this report affect people already participating in the local economy and community, not only those who have just arrived.

Today, immigration continues to be central to Canada's social and economic future. Newcomers bring skills, knowledge, experiences, and perspectives that enrich the communities where they live. As those communities grow more diverse, creating real opportunities for newcomers to participate, contribute, and belong remains essential to a strong and inclusive society. The IRCC's own planning reflects this, framing a sustainable immigration system as one where housing, healthcare, and social infrastructure are consistent with arrivals. Investing in LIP Councils and frontline settlement capacity is the factor that determines whether the settlement journey is successful on the ground, community by community.



Moving Forward

Overall, the survey and assessment findings reinforce the need for coordinated, system-level approaches that address the interconnected needs that arise during a settlement journey. Strong and meaningful collaboration across sectors would directly help communities address the challenges newcomers confront, especially those related to housing, employment, language and education, and healthcare. Together, these findings stress the need for continued investment, coordinated policy responses, and stronger local infrastructure. This will ensure communities can effectively meet the needs of newcomers.

The findings also point to the importance of directing resources toward high-need newcomer groups experiencing greater barriers. This includes younger newcomers, newcomers who have been in Canada for less than a year, as well as newcomers facing language barriers, who reported lower outcomes across several areas of settlement.

Finally, the findings point to a clear funding gap. Local partners are doing important work to support newcomers, but current funding levels do not appear to match the scale or complexity of settlement needs across BC and Yukon. With only 32.3% of LIP evaluation respondents agreeing that their organization receives adequate funding to sustain newcomer-focused programs and services, sustainable investment must be treated as central to newcomer inclusion rather than an operational detail. Without consistent and flexible funding, communities will struggle to maintain programs, coordinate across sectors, respond to emerging needs, and build the long-term infrastructure required for truly welcoming communities.



Thank You !



This work was made possible through the support and collaboration of **DiverseCity Community Resources** and the **BC/Yukon LIP, ZIP, and RIF Network**, including local LIPs, diversity partners, and funders. We look forward to seeing these insights contribute to stronger, more welcoming communities where newcomers can feel they truly belong.



inclusivity

Let's create spaces where all people can feel seen, heard, and valued—especially when it matters most.

At Inclusivity, we help organizations turn intention into action—building cultures of trust, care, and courage even in complex times. Whether you're just getting started or ready to deepen your inclusion efforts, we're here to support your journey with training, facilitation, and strategic guidance.

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